

Buddhism in Our Daily Life

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Any country anywhere in the world, east or west, north or south, if it is to be governed well and governed successfully, must have within it its own system of law enforcement. Laws of a land, if they are wisely and meaningfully formulated, regulate the life of people, as to what they should do and what they should not do. This should equally well apply to the people severally and to the state as a collective responsible unit. This is how what is wholesome and what is conducive to the well being of both man and his environment can be brought about.

More than ever before, the laws of the land in many countries are very actively concerned with this second aspect of safeguarding the world as man's habitat. So much so that new concepts like eco-systems and biodiversity are very much in the air and on the lips of even growing up young children. People are being sensitized on these issues because they are vital for our own existence on this planet. We wish to emphasize the words 'our existence' in this context, because in the world today there is a lamentable absence of this concept and its total implications.

Existence in the world we live in is built upon a very complex network of multiple relationships of man and bird and beast on one side and the entirety of the geophysical world besides ourselves on the other. This harmony or friendly and non-hostile relationship is absolutely essential.

If Buddhism as a religion is to teach humans any lesson at all, we believe this is its central theme. Any conflict within man, and of course of the woman as well, in relation to the rest of the world besides oneself, by way of either being excessively attracted to it or being violently repelled by it, is traced to be the cause of all uneasiness, stress and unhappiness in the world. This lack of harmony, due to a lack of the much desired virtue of dignified detachment or

neutrality in our dealings with the world is the cause of all misery in the world. It does not exist by itself in the world, nor is it sent down to us by way of punishment from anywhere above.

Buddhism's listing of evil in man embraces this vast segment of badly formulated attitudes and aspirations of the humans while they struggle in life to survive without perishing. In this violent bid to exist, without our ever realizing how much inroads we make into the lives of others, by our over doing things in our desire to gratify our sensual desires, we bring misery into the world which we share with others. Unhappiness is undeniably man made and certainly not god given. Therefore both its reduction and elimination must lie in the hands of humans. Human unhappiness is indeed punishment of ourselves by our selves. This is how the Buddhist theory of *kamma* and *vipāka* operate.

Buddhism in the lives of people must play this vital role of making them face up to life's problems with both wisdom and courage. Buddhism's first precept of the *pañcasīla* requires respect for life in all forms, of life on land, sea or air. This applies equally well, we believe, to whether one directly kills for the table or makes demands on the killed products to feed themselves and their families, thereby contributing the effective operation of the law of supply and demand and continual increase of the rate of killing for those who eat. Make a bid to cut down the rate of consumption of the carcasses of killed animals and there would naturally be a reduction in killing for carcass eaters. In many parts of the world like America, Europe and Australia, certainly not in Sri Lanka, this argument is bravely put forward by humanists like Peter Singer and Frances Moore Lappe in their bid to save animals.

Look again. Buddhism is not quite happy with the human degradation brought about by drugs and alcohol, long before the days of Marijuana and LSD of the developed world. It is undoubtedly degradation in all areas of health, wealth and reputation. But men, women and children in Sri Lanka, perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, turn their back on these. They are evidently being schooled in a tradition of 'to prestige via the bottle', even in their own

homes, via their own parents. Most of them are both too dull and too dense to note the increase of related crime rates in our own country, in areas like rape, incest and sex violence. Statistics show increase of alcohol related hospitalization, both of men and women all over the world, including Sri Lanka. .

Waken up to religious injunctions which endeavour to guide humans on their track through precipitous paths laid out through life. Manufactures of motor vehicles now desperately turn in the direction of air bags to save the lives of reckless drivers. Buddhism has many more safety valves built into the lives adventurous people who, in their spirit of gambling, plunge down many a precipice, to the bitter lament of those who survive to witness them.